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JULY, 1927

ADVANTAGES TO BE DERIVED FROM TESTING SAMPLES OF SEED POTATOES IN THE SOUTH

Karl H. Fernow

Every spring the seed grower asks: "What seed shall I plant?" Usually he answers the question himself by planting his own seed. Frequently he plants stock which he knows or ought to know will not produce satisfactory seed. Not infrequently he does this while the certification official looks on and says nothing, thus becoming accessory before the act. Of course a much more frequent condition is that neither the grower nor the certification official knows the seed to be undesirable, although they may suspect it.

What are the results of these practices? Sometimes the grower recognizes the mistake when the plants come up. He may then withdraw his field from inspection thus saving his fees but losing his chances of profit on the certified seed project. Perhaps more frequently he hopes he can still save the day by severe roguing. He spends many a golden hour pulling out plants which would produce at least a half crop, when he ought to be getting in his hay or taking his kid to the circus. Then the inspector comes and shakes his head and tries to break the news gently. The grower is sore and discouraged. Or, it may be that the grower has done a better job and the inspector will have to repeat his visit. Then more roguing with another possibility of ultimate failure. But, the field may pass and the grower then gets his pay for the roguing he did.

Who buys the stock? Perhaps a table stock grower in New Jersey, California or Louisiana. In this case the buyer will probably be fairly well satisfied and the consequences may not be serious unless the stock happens to come under the observation of some extension worker, in which case the relatively high percentage of disease present injures the reputation of the seed grower, his particular State, and certified seed in general.

On the other hand the stock may come directly or indirectly into the hands of a seed grower, perhaps a new grower with the

beautiful faith that all he has to do to have his crop certified is to plant certified seed and pay his fees. He is soon disillusioned and is quite likely thereafter to put certification of seeds in the same class with wildcat mines and bucket shops.

These and others are the evils which result from our ignorance as to the value of certain fields for foundation stock. The grower would rather take a chance on his own seed than buy something that may be worse. The certification official dares not stake his reputation on a recommendation of any given field or the denunciation of any other for fear he will come to be regarded as a false prophet on the one hand, or a player of favorites on the other.

It is then evident that there is great need for some method of discovering and demonstrating which fields are likely to produce suitable foundation stock. Perhaps the most promising method now available is the testing of samples in advance of the planting season. New York and Nebraska are doing this by planting the samples in Florida where results of inspections can be obtained before April 1. Minnesota and some other states are trying to do the same thing in the greenhouse.

The procedure for New York is as follows: Samples of 200 tubers are selected by the grower from each field to be tested. These are collected at Ithaca about November 1 and shipped by freight to Hastings, Florida. The samples are planted about February 1 by arrangement with a Florida grower. The planting has been supervised for the last three years by Florida Experiment Station workers. About the last week in March the writer has made the trip to Florida for the purpose of making the inspections.

With regard to results it can be said that the percentages obtained agree in a general way with those obtained in other ways. A high degree of accuracy cannot be expected with such a small sample. On the other hand, if larger samples were taken, the growers might not be so careful to obtain a fair sample.

The returns from a financial point of view are hard to evaluate, but are probably several times the outlay, which has been about \$200 a year. The returns might be many times as great if more growers would take advantage of the opportunity offered.

The potential returns to the certified seed industry as a whole appear to the writer to be very great. Every year we reject for certification from 30 to 40 per cent of the acreage for which application has been made. It appears to the writer that at least two thirds of these rejections would be needless if we applied a little foresight and foreknowledge. To allow and even encourage growers to plant poor seed and then reject their fields for an excess of disease is inefficient. Would it not be much better to plant only the satisfactory seed?

Some people believe that the quality of the seed stock from any state is measurable by the percentage of rejections, the state rejecting the most having the best quality. The writer believes this to be

illogical and holds that by taking thought we might pass 90 to 95 per cent of our fields and still produce better seed than we are now producing. If this created an oversupply we could be more strict in our grading requirements.

POTATO MARKET PROSPECTS FOR THE KAW VALLEY

E. A. Stokdyk

The market outlook for Kaw Valley potatoes is a great deal brighter than it was last year. Although there was an increase in acreage planted, flood damage early in the growing season reduced the acreage in the Kaw Valley to 15,100 acres, or 700 acres less than last year. Competing early sections also have smaller plantings than last year. Virginia has 10,000 acres less than in 1926. Flood damage reduced acreage and condition in Missouri, Kentucky, and Illinois.

In addition to a smaller acreage for harvest in the second early sections, the carlot shipments from the South have been heavier than a year ago. This means that the South will be through shipping by the time the second early districts are marketing and will not furnish competition as they did last year.

Some seasonal declines in prices may be expected in the last part of July. These declines usually take place when the corn belt home gardens mature. For the past seven years, each year has witnessed a declining potato market from the middle of July to the first of August. In five of these seven years, prices have recovered in the first ten days of August. There is good reason to expect the same trend again this year. The tendency to rush potatoes to market in late July seems hard to overcome. Fear of heavy rains, anxiety to put in a cover crop and fear that the North will begin shipping early, all tend to induce growers to put too many potatoes on the market at that time of the season. Receipts at Chicago for the past seven years have been higher in the last ten days of July than in any other period, while the second early states are shipping.

The price recovery in early August that has occurred in five of the past seven years is quite probable again this year because the earliest districts of the North are late.

The situation, in brief, indicates high potato prices until September 1 with seasonal declines in late July.—**June 28, 1927.**

CROP AND MARKET NEWS

PRICES DECLINE RAPIDLY; FIRST CROP REPORT OF SEASON

(Contribution from the Fruit and Vegetable Division, Bureau of
Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture)

With potato shipments, chiefly from Virginia, averaging around 1,000 cars daily, movement during the early part of July was again

approaching the high mark attained in late June. Shipments for the third week of June were considerably heavier than those of the same period last season. The next two weeks, though they registered the peak movement of 1927 southern potatoes, were not quite so heavy as a year ago, because of the earliness of the present season. By July 10, the pendulum had swung the other way and carlot output was again exceeding that of the same time last year. Combined total of new potatoes for five weeks ending July 9—26,000 cars—was only 400 greater than the corresponding movement during 1926. Old potato output for those five weeks scarcely reached 1,000 cars and was only one-third as heavy as last season. Maine was closing with a record of 42,700 cars, an increase of 4,000 over the 1925-26 total. The season total for 19 surplus-producing late-potato states was 180,000 cars,—a net gain of 5,000 over the year before.

Several new States were added to the shipping list during the week of July 3-9. These were Kentucky, Idaho and Utah. New Jersey had not yet started carlot movement. Eastern Shore of Maryland and the upper half of the Virginia peninsula were very active, while the southern tip was cleaning up. Rains hindered digging for a short period. During that week, Norfolk section output decreased to 580 cars; Eastern Shore Virginia increased to 3,300 and Maryland to 450. By July 10, Virginia East Shore had shipped 10,400 cars, Norfolk section 3,500, and Maryland 660, a combined movement 43 per cent greater than to that time last season. North Carolina reached high total for the season of 7,300 cars. Oklahoma was nearing an end with 2,100, about the same as last year. The Missouri season is late, and only a few cars had been reported as yet from that State, but the Kaw Valley of Kansas was shipping 75 cars daily. Missouri's crop is estimated to be only 60 per cent of normal. The California potato season is considerably later than last year.

A fairly heavy crop of fine-quality potatoes is anticipated along the Atlantic Coast, with more moderate conditions in the Middle West, and good crops expected in the North and far West. The State of Washington anticipates heavy shipments the coming season. Southern New Jersey's crop has been delayed. Long Island should begin shipping by July 20 or 25. Cold weather had retarded potatoes in Colorado, but light shipments probably will begin by the middle of July. Better quality is expected in the northern section of Colorado this year as a result of planting a large proportion of certified Red River Valley Cobblers. Some evidences of disease are noticed in northern Colorado, probably in consequence of cold, wet weather during the growing period.

Average yields of 75 to 100 barrels per acre were being reported on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, with quality unusually good. Similar favorable conditions seem to exist in the eastern Maryland region. Commercial potato acreage on Long Island is estimated

at 38,500 acres, or about 5 per cent more than last season. Around one-fourth the total is early Cobblers, and the remainder is Green Mountains for the later market. Condition of the Long Island crop on June 24 was estimated at 85 per cent of normal, compared with nearly 100 per cent a year ago. The estimated commercial production in eight second-early States is 10,270,000 bushels, or about 5 per cent less than last season. Sharp decreases are shown for Kansas and Missouri. Gains appear certain for Maryland and New Jersey. Nearly 4,000,000 bushels are forecast in New Jersey, compared with 3,590,000 bushels in 1926.

Prices Drop to Normal Range

Soon after the rapid rise of prices in early June, declines began to occur. By July, most quotations were around the same level as a year ago, with Eastern Shore Cobblers about \$3.50 per barrel, f. o. b. shipping point, and sacked stock bringing \$2.00-\$2.25 per 100 pounds at Kaw Valley points. Eastern arrivals averaged around \$4.00 or \$4.25 in terminal markets, while mid-western Cobblers were jobbing close to \$2.75 in central cities. Prices were but little more than one-third as high as they had been a month before.

From now on, the price situation will correspond more closely with the monthly production estimates. First complete crop report of the season was made on July 11. Total production of 392,943,000 bushels is forecast from a planted area of 3,495,000 acres. Based on the July 1 population estimate of 118,628,000 persons in continental United States, this would mean an average of 3.31 bushels per capita. The total acreage is the highest since 1923 and is about 11 per cent greater than last year. All the important late States show increases. Only three States, Arkansas, Missouri and Virginia, show decreases. Principal acreage increases are as follows: New York 9 per cent, Maine 11 per cent, Michigan, Wisconsin and North Dakota 12 per cent each, Montana 15 per cent, Idaho 26 per cent, and Colorado 33 per cent more than last year. Of course, the final production in all these States may not be in proportion to the increased plantings. General condition of the crop on July 1 was 84.9 per cent of normal, which is 3.5 points higher than a year ago, but slightly below the 10-year average for July 1. Estimated total production of 393,000,000 bushels compares with last year's crop of 356,000,000 and the huge crop of 422,000,000 bushels in 1924. Average for the last five years has been about 394,000,000 bushels. According to July 1 condition, it looked like an average yield of 112.43 bushels per acre.

Connecticut.—Potatoes are looking fairly well at this date. Many growers complain of poor stands and think the cold weather in May was the chief cause. However, faulty fertilizer application or rhizoctonia may have been responsible in some cases.

A good set of tubers should be obtained this year for moisture and temperature conditions have been favorable during June, the month when a large percentage of the Connecticut crop reaches the tuber forming stage. Limited observations corroborate this supposition.

New potatoes have been wholesaling at from \$5.50 to \$7.00 per barrel recently. Old potatoes are quoted at \$3.50 to \$5.00 per two bushel sack with limited offerings.—**B. A. Brown, June 28.**

Maryland.—The Fourth Annual Potato Tour of Worcester County took place on Thursday, June 16th. Among other things of interest the party inspected on three different farms the test plots of 24 strains of Irish Cobblers. The party also inspected the Irish potato fertilizer plots on the sub-station of the Maryland Experiment Station, two miles north of Snow Hill.

After lunch, an entertainment feature took the form of a mock trial. The subject of the sketch was "Three Potato Thieves on Trial". From the cast of characters, it appears that the thieves were "Stealthy Scab", "Ruthless Rhizoctonia" and "Venomous Virus (Mosaic)".

Members of the Extension Service, Local Farm Bureau, Potato Growers and Townspeople made up the cast. After the examination of the following witnesses, Agricultural Advice, Good Grade, Intense Inspection, Doctor Diseases and Prosperous Producer for the prosecution and Shiftless Skeptic, Lena Lanky and Rastus Razor for the defendants, the jury agrees on a verdict of guilty. The judge thereupon orders Stealthy Scab to be permanently banished from Worcester County by planting potatoes free from scab, treating seed potatoes and plowing under cover crops; Ruthless Rhizoctonia by using certified seed, treating seed potatoes and plowing under cover crops; Ruthless Rhizoctonia by using certified seed, treating seed potatoes and planting land where Rhizoctonia is severe to other crops for at least three years; and Venomous Virus by using northern grown certified seed of known origin or home grown certified seed.

The early Irish potato crop in Worcester County is in excellent condition. The stand in most cases, is very good and the crop has had exceptional growing conditions. A few of the growers located close to the water, have commenced shipping.—**Fred W. Geise, June 24.**

Minnesota.—Official figures on the potato acreage in Minnesota will not be available until the first part of July. However, indications are that there will be some increase over the state. In the sand land region, the territory devoted principally to early potatoes, the stands are very good. In other parts of the state where the soils are heavier the stands are quite spotted, especially in the lowlands where much of the seed was injured by standing water shortly after planting.—**R. C. Rose, June 27, 1927.**

Nebraska.—On the whole climatic conditions have been very favorable for the potato crop in all parts of Nebraska this spring. The weather has been cool and there has been an abundance of moisture. There has been an increased demand for Irish Cobbler potatoes throughout the early potato producing regions in the eastern and southern part of the state. This variety promises to replace the Early Ohio as rapidly as satisfactory seed potatoes can be secured. Black Leg and Rhizoctonia have of course been very serious in the early potato regions. The value of certification and seed treatment are very evident in connection with these troubles this year. Several of the large distributors of potatoes located in Nebraska are making the treating of seed potatoes with hot formaldehyde a permanent feature of their seed potato business. Extensive trials last year indicated that such commercial treatments resulted in a very distinct increase in the yield of potatoes.

In the western part of the state the planting was delayed to some extent by very late snows and heavy rains. These conditions however, supplied the entire commercial region with a large amount of soil moisture; consequently prospects are very promising for a good crop this season. As a result of the very great demand for and the margin paid on certified seed potatoes last year, there is a greater interest in production of certified seed than has existed during the last three years. The prospects are that the acreage entered for inspection this year will be twice as great as that entered in 1926. A considerable quantity of the seed being used for this new acreage is of course not very promising but on the whole most of these new growers are using very promising lots of seed.

In the irrigated areas there has been a very great demand for seed potatoes at planting time, due to the loss of considerable sugar beet acreage during the earlier part of the season.

For some reason or other, southern buyers are unusually active in endeavoring to contract certified seed potatoes at this season of the year. Another new development is very active interest on the part of the sub-tropical or tropical regions in securing seed potatoes which will be of certified seed quality but which can be harvested in August. We have had correspondence with interests located in Mexico, extreme southern Florida, Cuba and Bermuda. It is possible that arrangements will be made to try out Ethylene Chlorhydrin treatments on carlots of seed this year, for the purpose of shortening the rest period and thus permitting these regions to get seed potatoes at the time they need them for growing a winter crop.—H. O. Werner, June 25.

New Jersey.—With an acreage slightly larger than last year, and with good growing conditions, the New Jersey potato crop promises to be exceptionally good. The crop is not without the usual assortment of diseases including, the degenerative diseases, black leg and rhizoctonia, but with the exception of a few in-

stances, these diseases are not particularly severe. In some fields in Central Jersey, there was considerable rhizoctonia injury due to the failure to treat the seed. Where the organic mercury dip treatments were used, the amount of this injury was greatly reduced. At the present time, there is no late blight, with only a trace of early blight. Aphids are very severe in some fields and are likely to prove to be very troublesome on the Green Mountain variety. Irish Cobblers from P. E. I. are, in many instances, maturing, whereas South Jersey seed shows no signs of maturing. Some few potatoes have been dug in South Jersey but a commercial movement will not start for a week or ten days. In Central Jersey a few fields planted with northern seed will be dug next week, but there will not be a heavy movement until after the eighteenth of July.

Three potato meetings were held in New Jersey during June. The Seed Potato Certification Conference held at Freehold was better attended than any of the previous meetings and it was agreed to hold a similar meeting at Freehold again next year. On June 21, a meeting of the potato growers of Central Jersey was held at Allentown, with 200 growers present. At this meeting, potato spraying, grading, and other items of importance were discussed. On June 30, a meeting of the South Jersey seed potato growers was held at Elmer, with over 150 present. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss seed potato production methods.—**Wm. H. Martin, July 7.**

Pennsylvania.—The late crop of potatoes are about all in the ground through Eastern Pennsylvania and every where I visit (and I call continuously in all the largest potato growing sections) the stand is very poor. Probably averaging about 70 per cent of a stand. In many places the stand is fair but very weak with very large stalks along side of weak ones just through the ground. The present indications are a crop considerable below normal and not near as much as last season.

No large acreage increases are noted. The planting was about the same as last season.

Many growers who never sprayed before are preparing to spray or dust this season so the crop will be better cared for than before.—**D. C. Heim, Entomologist, June 20.**

Wisconsin.—Potato planting operations were practically finished in Wisconsin about June 25 under generally favorable conditions. Early planted seed is now well out of the ground and is generally reported in very favorable condition. On the heavy soils, a small percentage of seed stock has rotted and early growth has partially been retarded due to unusually cool weather. However, at this writing we consider potato crop conditions in Wisconsin as generally satisfactory.

There has been a certain increase in acreage on the Irish Cobbler variety, planted for the early truck market, and this acreage is reported generally in good condition.

Applications for seed potato inspection are being received at the present time in Wisconsin and the date for receipt of these applications will close July 15. We are expecting an increase of 15 per cent to 20 per cent in the certified seed acreage in Wisconsin this year. The preliminary inspections, especially in reference to the Triumph variety will start about July 15.

During the annual potato tour, held during the week of August 15 to 20, a summer meeting of the Wisconsin Potato Growers' Association will be held at Rhinelander on Thursday, August 18.

At a recent meeting of farming and business interests at Rhinelander a permanent organization for the state potato show was affected. Mr. Angus McDonald of Three Lakes was elected general chairman of Oneida County committees. The state potato show will be held at Rhinelander, November 1-4, 1927.—**J. G. Milward, June 28.**

Virginia.—The Virginia spud will be king and rule the potato markets of the United States for the next few weeks. May his reign be a wise and profitable one.

Last year the North Carolina crop put the skids under the market and the low prices almost ruined the Virginia growers who had a very light crop. The movement of potatoes from North Carolina was very heavy last week and the bulk of the crop has been moved and is no longer a ruling factor in the market. The prices have held up remarkably well considering the volume which has moved during the past two weeks. At present the f. o. b. price in Eastern Virginia is from \$4.00 to \$4.50 a barrel. The movement to date from Virginia has been considerably heavier than that for the corresponding period last year. Up to June 25th the Norfolk and Eastern Shore sections have shipped 3,149 cars as compared with 2,380 cars up to June 26th in 1926.

The average quality of the crop is excellent this year. Cool dry weather provided almost ideal conditions for digging. Disease played havoc early in the season in reducing the stand but the plants left are as a rule almost free from the troubles often encountered. Timely rains during late May and early June greatly increased the yields over those estimated earlier in the season. In many fields, yields as high as 100 barrels per acre have been reported. Naturally, there are exceptions but the average yield is somewhat higher than that of a five year's average.

If the price is maintained near the present level, the prospects are good that the Virginia growers will be able to pay their seed and fertilizer bills and have enough left to retire—the family car.

Movement from Virginia will likely be heavy until August 20th or 25th.—**H. H. Zimmerly, June 30.**

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POTATO CONFERENCES AND TOURS

MICHIGAN STATE POTATO TOUR

August 8 to 18, 1927

Opportunity will be given growers, dealers and others interested in the Potato industry to see the Michigan Potato Crop in the making. The Michigan State Potato Tour will traverse the leading potato growing sections of the state. Fields grown for the table stock market and for the certified seed trade will be inspected. Special lectures, demonstrations and field meetings will be staged to emphasize the educational part of the tour.

Starting at East Lansing, August 8th, visitors will have opportunity to examine experimental plots and will then leave for Greenville, Montcalm county for supper and lodging. From Greenville the tour will proceed through Montcalm, Mecosta and Osceola counties to Cadillac, the home of the Michigan Potato Growers Exchange. After inspecting fields in the vicinity of Traverse City, the nearby counties of Antrim, Otsego and Emmett will be visited. In this area a large portion of the certified seed potato crop of the state is grown.

At Mackinaw Straits the tour will divide and those wishing to make the tour into the Upper Peninsula will cross the Straits while those touring the Lower Peninsula will continue the tour through Cheboygan, Presque Isle and Alpena counties, ending the southern Peninsula tour at Alpena on August 13th. The Upper Peninsula tour will include certified and table stock potato fields in Luce, Schoolcraft, Marquette, Dickinson and Menominee counties.

At many points along the tour special entertainment will be provided by various local committees. All interested in the production and handling of Michigan potatoes are cordially invited to attend

the tour. Detailed information of the tour can be obtained from H. C. Moore, Chairman, Potato Tour Committee, East Lansing, Michigan.

MINNESOTA TOUR

Plans have just been made for the Minnesota 1927 potato tour. The tour this year will start on August 2nd and end up on the 5th. The first day of the tour will be spent in Clay County, visiting some of the potato fields of the leading growers. The second day will be spent in the western part of Polk County in the region known as Minnesota Point. On the third day the tour will include a visit of the potato fields in the territory around Mahanomen, Minnesota. August 5th will be potato day in Carlton and Pine Counties, where the tour will cover the territory between Carlton and Hinckley, in Pine County.

1927 WISCONSIN POTATO TOUR

Tour arranged jointly by Horticultural Department, Wisconsin Experiment Station—Wisconsin Potato Growers' Association, co-operating with local tour committees.

(Slight changes may be made in schedule as printed below. Such changes, if any, will be announced in the final official map, program and schedule of the Tour to be mailed about July 15.)

Monday, August 15.—Tour assembles at Pembine, Marinette County. Tour northern Marinette County region. Monday night at Laona, Forest County.

Tuesday, August 16.—Tour Forest County around Crandon and Laona. Arrive Antigo, Langlade County, Tuesday evening.

Wednesday, August 17.—Tour Langlade County around Antigo, Arrive Rhinelander, Wednesday evening.

Thursday, August 18.—Tour eastern, western and southern Oneida County. Thursday night at Rhinelander.

Friday, August 19.—Tour eastern Oneida County around Starks. Friday night at Rhinelander. Friday night at Eagle River.

Saturday Forenoon, August 20.—Tour Vilas County around Eagle River.

Tour closes at Eagle River Saturday noon, August 20.

Program Features.—Special detailed program features will be announced in the official program issued in July.

For further information write to J. G. Milward, U. W. Horticultural Bldg., Madison, Wisconsin.